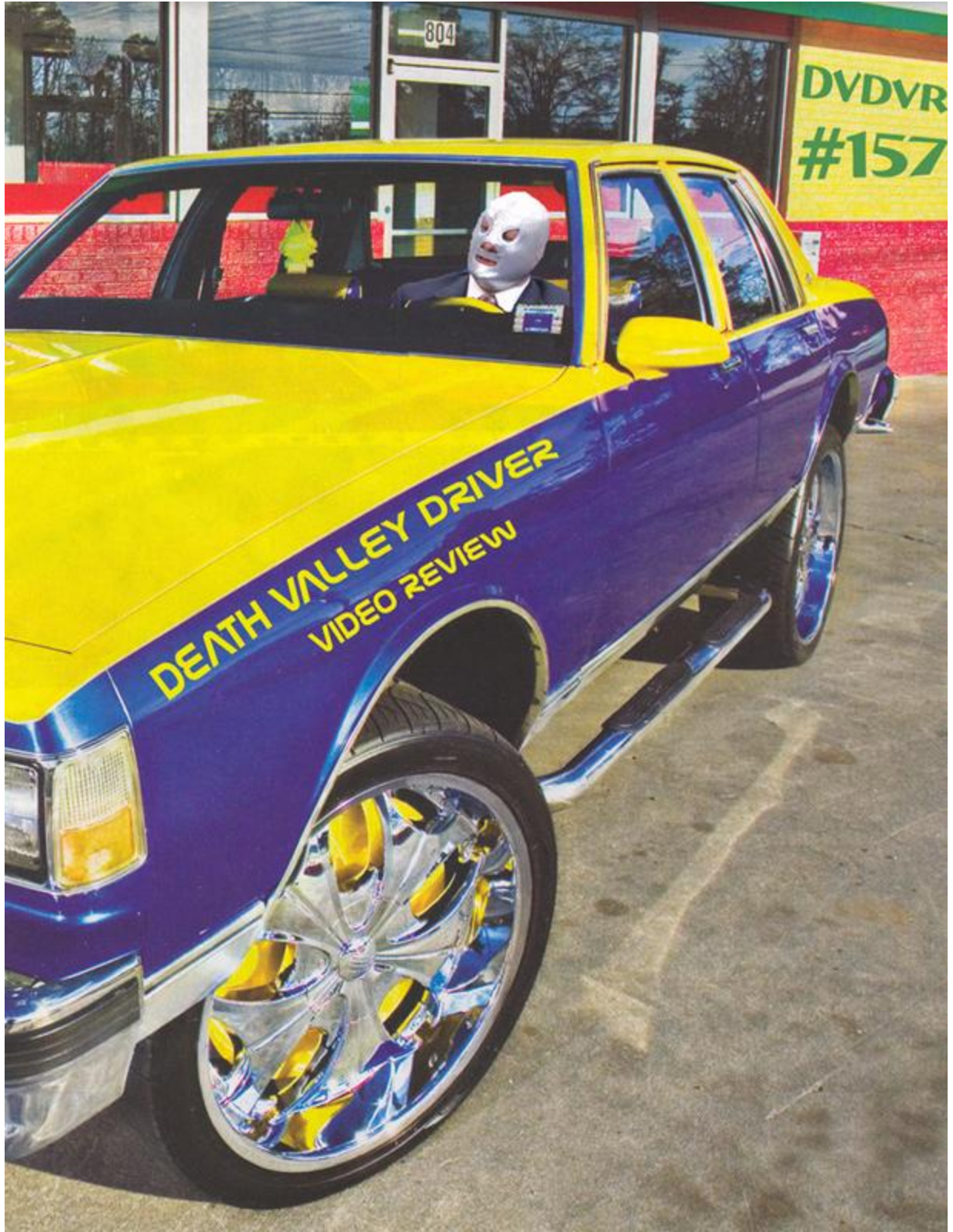




WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #157!

The beautiful cover was assembled by the sexy and talented Raven Mack.

A 12-Pack Wrasslin' Reviewed Adventure Through Late '70s Florida
[Raven Mack]

(BEER ONE) I could go through one of my long rambling pretentious soliloquies of nonsense, but who the fuck really cares? I'm just a tired gimmick to half the people who even bother to read this shit anymore - an internet wrestling community HonkyTonk Man. I can't afford to buy any bullshit wrestling, and slack off on proper trading etiquette whenever I find someone willing to mail me anything. The only dude who did mail me anything recently, I even lost the two DVDs he sent me, somewhere in the clutter that is my house. By internet standards, I am a piece of shit. It's kinda funny, I tend to hate the internet because people get to be what they aren't in real life - maybe a player with the ladies through IMs and shit, or a super-cool dude to know by having all the new or classic shit on DVD format for the burning, or whatever. That fits me; in real life, I'm a good dude, solid family man, more like CDB's "Longhaired Country Boy" than DAC's "Longhaired Redneck", but on the internet I forget to mail shit or respond to shit or not use derogatory terms for homosexuals, so I'm the big fat piece of shit.

It only makes sense that I'd watch some late '70s Florida wrestling, as back then wrestling was geared towards pieces of shits like me. Being a big fat piece of shit is the backbone as well as braintrust of America. The illegals doing construction work far more happily and better not to mention cheaper than American folks? Pieces of shit who'd love to fuck your wife on a picnic table. The energy industry CEOs clocking mad bonuses while gas prices cause bunches of folks to run up their credit card bills? Pieces of shit who'd love to figure out a way to siphon half of your only fairly wealthy relative's money before you get whatever scrap of it you were supposed to get. People get so smart and lovey-dovey with the Great Art of Professional Wrestling that they forget it's supposed to make you want to stab Iranians in its purest essence.

Tape starts with Gordon Solie, who looks fairly healthy at this point in his life and probably only smoked one pack a day and hid maybe a pint-sized bottle of gin under his desk. He is interviewing the Funk bros. who are, of course, bad-mouthing and belittling Dusty Rhodes. Terry Funk is rocking some Bo Derek braids, which at the time must've been a wild-ass thing to do for a man to rock the beaded braids, but through the filter of time, it's even funnier because it looks like he might love drinking beer while listening to David Banner instrumentals.

(BEER TWO) Just as amazing as Funk's braids is how Dory rolled with that weird crazy baldhead style where he had the one brush's width of strands he pulled forward and glued to his head for like 15 years. It makes him look weirdly menacing, like the type of guy who'd be fighting Philo Beddo in a sausage factory just outside Tucson. Clips of a bunkhouse match between the Funks and Bill Watts & Rhodes. Both Funks have t-shirts with iron-on letters, and Rhodes is wearing a bar t-shirt. That's motherfuckin' wrestling. I suggest you all, next time you go into the damn Wal-Mart Megaplex for blank DVDs, go through the men's section and get yourself a pocket tee in some color you find fresh-dipped. Then go over to the craft section, where they got beads and fabric and all that crap, and usually you can find some iron-on letters. They've got fuzzy kind now, but they're more expensive and usually the simple flat kind are best (which you can sometimes find gold). Make yourself a t-shirt. It feels good. I've been rocking one lately

that's a brown tee with the white threads showing, and I put gold letters on the front that say "LAID BACK" and on the back that say "WIDE OPEN". That with some light brown swim trunks that hang down to my knees, looking like parachute pants, and the long dreads to match, I got all the hippie bitches wanting me to become polyamorous so they can be my second or third wife and have my fourth or fifth baby.

Eddie Graham is still wrestling at this point in time, and he's out to face a special challenge as some evil Jap manager has surprise attacked with a bounty hunter who says can beat Graham twice in ten minutes - Killer Khan. Khan's goofy hunch and lethargic stiffness, not to mention him being not whiteboy American-looking, make him the perfect monster heel, which is your perfect late '70s foil for Eddie Graham, looking like your hard-working uncle who runs an auto body shop with the trailer-like wood paneling in the front office and pictures of Chevrolet hot rods framed all over the walls. Start of the match is pretty interesting as Khan is controlling Graham with technical matwork. Killer Khan locked up on the mat like Kurt Angle turned Krishna? Believe that shit. They actually fuckin' wrestle before Khan brings the violence. If this happened at WWE Expensive Event '06 between Angle and Benoit, motherfuckers would be analyzing the texture of fan cumshots who watched it for signs of whether it truly was a nine-star or ten-star match; but no, this is just Saturday syndicated TV back then, shit that came on after Scooby Doo and before SEC football.

(BEER THREE) Solie has already said both, "Eddie Graham, with a good ride on Khan," as well as "Graham will go anyway you want to go." Perhaps I should just slug beer whenever Solie says something that reminds me of shitty modern-day Penthouse Forum letters. I find it hard to believe that many men enjoy eating another man's semen out of their wife's cooch. This match is a textbook example of how you keep your old face's heart power with the fans while putting over the new invading monster heel, as Khan promised he could pin Graham twice in ten minutes, so then on TV you can have Eddie get his old ass whooped from pillar to post, but as long as he kicks out by three, his reputation holds up. And Killer Khan looks like this unstoppable force who, even though he didn't pin Graham twice in ten minutes, fucked the old dude up right smart. Other Japs get involved, as well as Mike Graham and Ray Stevens, and I want a Ray Stevens vs. Killer Khan match to show up here soon. Of course, in all the conundrum, Eddie Graham pins Khan accidentally just as a bumped ref regains consciousness, so the face wins without winning, and the monster heel loses without losing... it's the greatest infomercial you could ever want and it made for far better Saturday afternoon TV than mortgage midgets ever could dream of.

How about a little young Don Muraco vs. a balding Killer Karl Kox? Kox is awesome - a crazy old dude with strong forearms and foreign objects in his trunks going on, while Muraco is Muraco. You think about that timeframe and how things worked in the '80s - Muraco could've been a Hulk Hogan should Vince had chosen that look instead and Muraco been down with steroiding up, and then we'd have Muraco on VH1 reality shows. I've only seen that Hogan show like three times, but I've learned one very important thing from watching it - Hulk's got a nicer ass than his daughter does and I'd probably fuck him while staring at his wife's fake breasts than even want to touch his ugly-ass daughter. I sometimes think pop music cable media has a running joke as to how fuckin' ugly a girl they can make into a sex symbol. Like a couple of old dudes like those brothers from Trading Places are sitting there going, "Mortimer, I know Ashlee Simpson looks like a man's unwashed ass, but I've got this Brooke Hogan girl

who's even more manly-faced and little-boy assed, but I bet if I slap her in a bikini and parade her around on this television show I've concocted where her dad is paranoid she's being too sexual, people will actually attempt to find naked pictorials of her on this internet we're heavily invested in." Then again, if Muraco had been Hulk, then I'd probably hate him now. I always got to be hating on popular shit.

Muraco's all bloodied up and Kox is refusing to pin him, doing big wind-up elbowsmashes that are over-dramatic, but not to the point of comedy. That's a fine line that sports entertainment washed away years ago. Muraco schoolboys a victory, Kox bites the top rope while shaking like a madman before beating the shit out of the up-and-comer. These TV matches are textbook examples of how to make new faces look good while keeping old faces looking good. And Muraco does one helluva good post-brainbuster epileptic-style leg twitch, even continuing it through a few boots to the head. He stops after the third or fourth stop, and perhaps this was because they were so genius that Kox is attempting to jostle the brain back into correction, much like slapping someone after the sleeperhold, and Muraco is partially recovered from the dastardly effects of the brainbuster. I don't believe that, but if you over-analyze anything, you can come up with some bullshit like that. Basically, it's just cool because one dude is having a fit and the other dude stomps him on the brain while he's having the fit.

(BEER FOUR) Kox beats down all saviours of the post-match beatdown schtick, until Rocky Johnson rolls up in the ring, pulls his t-shirt off, and Kox, an aging beer bellied white man with KKK initials, he sees the future from 1979, and he wants to fight it but he knows he can't beat it. It was best said eight years later by a man who liked gold teeth and flavored crack - you can't stop the bum rush, holmes.

Next up, Solie is confronting Ernie Ladd about him being around only to collect a bounty Harley Race put up on Dusty Rhodes. I have to admit right now that Ernie Ladd has, in retrospect, become one of my favorite wrestlers ever, probably second only to Jimmy Valiant. I love the fact he became a heel not by being some African voodoo monster or some inner city jigaboo, but by being an intelligent, well-spoken, take no shortcuts black man, playing on the ignorance of wrestling's fanbase - pieces of shit, remember? - and turning it into money. We all compromise our morals for money, at whatever job we have; it's part of life. I wish I could wear a sequined vest with my name embroidered on the back while compromising my morals though. The beautiful thing about this segment is that Ladd acts as if he's not coming for the bounty by asking Solie questions about it, culminating in him pretty much saying that Race's bounty is chickenfeed for a man who makes the type of money the NWA World's Heavyweight Champion would be making. Ladd wants to fuck up Rhodes, but he's holding out for some real scrilla, and stands there, one leg on a chair, one on the floor, looking off to the side in contemplative splendor, while Solie asks him if they could continue the conversation after Ladd has his match on the television taping. Fuckin' perfect. The net-proclaimed master bookers of today should take a break from their fuckin' Tarantino-inspired soap operas and watch some of this old stuff to remember that simple shit is sometimes the best shit - just a guy looking off into the distance, while not ever calling attention to himself so that you have to consciously think, "Hey, that guy is looking off into the distance." Subtle actions are the spice of the wrestling con, but it seems it is assumed pop culture masses don't want spicy wrestling no more, unless by spicy you mean haggard-looking child abuse victims with goofy-looking fake breasts wearing S&M shorts in

pastel colors rolling around together in lesbian angles to fire up the viewing passion of guys who masturbate to Maxim.

(BEER FIVE) Ladd vs. Phil Mercado, your enhancement talent for this here 10-minute time limit throwdown. Ladd nails a big drawn-out boot to the face on Mercado, holds his arms apart to scare ringside kids with the giant reach of the black man, then drops a double legdrop on dude for the win, basically being Bizarro Hulk Hogan, but I'm sure he'll cut a better promo... Actually, the slow motion replay shows one thick leg across the throat, after Ladd had punched the man in the throat and choked him secretly from ref's vision, meaning he actually worked a body part. That automatically makes Ernie Ladd an awesome wrestler, doesn't it internet? Who's got my Ernie Ladd shoot interviews? Where's my Best of the Big Cat Volume 17, which is just every TV match he had for like four months in the fall of 1982? And he calls Dusty Rhodes "Dirty Rhodes" the whole time.

(BEER SIX) Harley Race is in-house, for a sit-down interview at the commentator's desk next on this thang, and Harley Race is all that I love about wrestling - bad armed services tattoo, odd yet not overbearing facial hair, solidly thick body but not muscular... Actually that right there is the perfect example, as I am a piece of shit, as I have stated, and sometimes being a piece of shit I find myself in piece of shit mindframes where I go out to some back roads bar to shoot pool on a 75 cents a game pool table, and try to pick a fight. Being a hippie-looking motherfucker with dreadlocks makes me starting trouble all the more hilarious, and usually I end up just making friends with crazy rednecks who thought I was just another pussy when they first saw me and we smoke joints behind the dumpster and the slut behind the bar takes care of both our tabs from that point on, but when I'm in that

either-my-ass-or-their-ass-but-somebody's-ass-has-to-get-kicked mindframe, and I'm scanning some local shitty bar's clientele, if I see some dude built like Batista, I automatically think that's a perfect target, because that's a guy who's all roided up, never actually deals with conflict, and is obviously over-compensating muscularly for his Napoleonic penis syndrome, and people who have recovered from low self-esteem to feeling good about themselves are pretty easy to break back down into low self-esteem on the short term with a couple of properly positioned smashed upside the face with things you have laying about. (A word of warning: this method does not always work, and I have the scars to prove it. But usually scars make for great stories, so it all evens out.) But if I see some thick Harley Race looking dude, adjusted for modern times, who's not all perfectly buff, but rough around the edges and looks like he's ready for wild times, regardless if that be with a woman in a bed or a man in an alley, that's the dude I'm not trying to start trouble with. In fact, that'll stifle my trouble-looking mind because you never know who is affiliated with who in those types of situations.

El Gran Apolo is defending his Florida TV title against Don Muraco, which ends in Muraco and some other dude cutting Apolo's hair, who, as Solie puts it, "is such an immaculate dresser, and keeps himself in such..." and trails off because the angle was almost over. Apolo cuts an angry promo in Spanish, and I wonder who he was. He looks a little like a young Perro Aguayo, but he's taller than five feet, so that can't be it.

A Dusty Rhodes/Wahoo McDaniel promo, and it's pathetic watching Dusty put over himself by not putting over himself in such a fake way, and to say, "Tell 'em, Indian" to Wahoo, and to do a stupid poem and say, "Show the clip, right now," as if he was the producer, which he probably was behind the scenes. Rhodes is so overbearing and obtrusive, and so famous, while

McDaniel was so quiet and unassuming but so goddamn awesome. I don't even know if he's alive or dead anymore; I know the last time I was supposed to see him, and this was like twelve years ago, he no-showed, and they announced it as being because he had a heart attack. If he's dead, somebody ought to book some podunk Carolina armory and invite eight of the toughest independent fuckers from Georgia to Virginia and run a Wahoo Memorial tournament one night, because if every shithead paralyzed and cancerized indy wrestler of the last five years or every nickel-and-dime dead ECW wrestler can have a memorial card in their honor, a guy like Wahoo would deserve one. And if he's still alive, somebody pay the man to come second today's minor stars. I'd pay ten bucks for a Polaroid with Wahoo if he was there to help Scotty Blaze do battle against the stupid Old School Empire. (Actually, I'd probably be in my car drinking a couple of beers during intermission, but I don't think a 33-year-old Wahoo McDaniel would be paying motherfuckers to take pictures with them either, and what better way to honor your heroes than to emulate them?) They go to clips with star commentary, and Dusty is doing the play-by-play to him busting Killer Karl Kox bloody with some bionic 'bows.

(BEER SEVEN) I went outside during that beer and got to thinking about who I would have be Wahoo McDaniel for now, and that got me to thinking about how top-tier dudes make a lot of money now, comparatively, but it seemed - and I don't know so I could be wrong - more folks back in the territorial days could make a living and not have to do other things for bills back then, meaning you could dedicate yourself to wrestling and dye your hair or wear a snake around your neck while driving a convertible or whatever. It's such a bigger business, but at the same time it's such a smaller business.

(BEER EIGHT) Would you trade one WWE for nine OVW's? I've never seen anything from the last two years of OVW, but yeah, I would. Goddamn, for somebody who wasn't gonna go on tangents, I've gone on a lot of tangents. Here... I'll be as boring as possible for this next clip of Ernie Ladd being totally black against Dusty Rhodes jive-ass white-ass Florida honky ass...

[lame-ass wrestling recap] Rhodes talks to Gordon Solie about bounty, and then Ladd comes out to shake hands with white flag on stick. Rhodes says jive, Ladd smacks him, they run off screen and make noise. Solie is shocked, and calls it a big mistake by Ladd. Rhodes comes back out and cuts a promo on Ladd about how he's so mad. Rhodes is really mad because Ernie Ladd smacked him. Rhodes was a big draw in Florida in the early '80s. Ernie Ladd was a multi-sport superstar, having played in the NFL. I bet some great matches ensued from this one. I hope some of it gets released soon.[/lame-ass wrestling recap]

Mike Graham and Steve Keirn are fighting two Japanese dudes - I actually dorked out and looked that shit up, it's Mr. Hito and Mr. Sakurada, but I prefer to assume it was a young Mr. Saito along with Sakuraba, so they'd be able to throw boulders through windows and do cartwheel stomps in real fistfights, so imagine what they'll do to a couple of young homoerotic fancy lads like Graham and Keirn. Both Japs have black long trunks with JAPAN in red letters down the side - that's pure pride. America is a great country, but beyond red, white, and blue zubaz weightlifters pants (why do guys who wear those types of pants specialize in twelve ounce curls so often?), how often do we wear our country down the side of our pants? I see girls running around with all sorts of brand names on the ass end of their sweatpants nowadays, but never "AMERICA". I think it might actually be Saito, and he's busting Mike Graham's head with all these nifty suplexes, and their manager - who speaks in really broken Engrish - is helping Solie with the commentary and it's some good stuff.

(BEER NINE) Hot tag to Keirn, and even in this clipped format, I am fired up for what might happen, not even knowing who the champion is nor caring, because good wrasslin' is good wrasslin'. Says evil manager on commentary, "Okay, dis is clumsy Steve Khan, because supposed to be Saito in the ring," after Keirn schoolboys his team's way to victory.

Now, we're onto some tag footage with Dusty Rhodes and other people, but that shit's got a digital glitch in it.

Manny Fernandez vs. Don Muraco for the Florida Heavyweight title: Fernandez is still in his Chia pet brownskin afro stage, yet to kick the short-and-long which would develop into the blonde rattail. He also has "M * F" on his trunks, but the star is not six-pointed like computer keyboards want you to use, rather it is five-pointed like 99% of the stars ever carved into American high school desks throughout history. Clips show Muraco fucking up Fernandez's leg, and Manny commentates, "I don't give, I don't know what the meaning of that word is; I got that Latin Soul in me, it just won't let me give." That's one of those times where you can cross literal consumption of aged media with modern day situations like the immigration brouhaha, and get yourself a hearty, jaded laugh. But Fernandez is all sorts of busted up, but fires up a comeback. Stupid ref got in the way, as always, and some big masked dude comes out and bodysplashes Fernandez into oblivion, so Muraco gets the belt. But Championship Wrestling from Florida was a torchbearer when it came to backstage cameras, and their sneaky little cameraman caught what looked like Ernie Ladd taking large wads of money from Sir Oliver Humperdink as Muraco sat there gloating in his victory, and Nikolai Volkoff was hanging out as well.

Rhodes is now cutting a promo from overseas in front of a bunch of guys working out in the ring in Japan trying to fill Antonio Inoki's shoes, as Rhodes puts it. This somehow leads into a classic clip within this regular broadcast of some old shit somebody sent me on DVD, of Rhodes vs. Harley Race for the World title. Watching this, and hearing Solie put Rhodes over, it makes me wish somebody could make a non-Rhodes CWF mix, because if Rhodes caught shit for putting himself over ridiculously as a booker in WCW years later, he obviously learned it from being put ridiculously over in Florida earlier on in his career. Stylishly speaking, I don't think there's a better headbutt from the turnbuckles than Harley Race's measured falling headbutt - no errant dive involved, just pinpoint cranium crushing. Rhodes wins! Rhodes wins!

(BEER TEN) Muraco vs. Jack Brisco as NWA Champ, and we get to see Muraco be a technical cat because at this point in time, that was the only appropriate way to start a World's Title match. In recent months, I've gained an appreciation for Jack Brisco as a great wrestler, always having blown him off because he didn't have a t-shirt with iron-on letters or get involved with The Great Kabuki's mist or anything like that. Jack Brisco was probably one of the last old school transitions from wrestling's early '70s semi-reality to it's early '80s semi-circus, and I took that for granted at the time, because he wasn't as captivating a personality as so many others. He is as technically capable as any Bryan Danielson, except Brisco looks like he'd rather hang out at a bar than the mall (bars at malls are more mall than bar, in case you were wondering). Muraco is working the left leg in this non-title match, even busting out a spinning toehold. Brisco gets a figure four on Muraco, but Muraco does something "that's never been done in the history of wrestling" as ol' drunk-ass Solie puts it, and reverses that shit. But there's five layers of drama within the reversal as they don't just roll over - Brisco is leaning back and Solie, in what was obviously a post-match voice-over, talks about how Brisco is realizing what is about to happen, so you see this long, drawn-out twist that for the modern fan, after a thousand Ric Flair

matches, you just take for granted, but it's made to seem like a big deal here. We get so desensitized; it's like anything - sex, violence, drugs - once you experience something regularly, you need a stronger dose, or at least a different dose. But somehow going retro and watching a figure-four reversal that wasn't a blonde head shaking emphatically and rather had a muscular guy trying to lean back the opposite way, it had a different effect. Some simple shit, and I know this is over-analysis, but at the same time, motherfuckers should be trying to do some different shit, because nine times out of ten, seventeen matches out of eighteen, if I go to a wrestling show, I secretly want to chant boring at half the shit I see, fuck how much work a worker puts into being a worker. When I'm the boss of a work crew, if somebody's a shitty worker, I give them shit; and in basic mom-and-pop capitalism, the customer is the boss, so that makes me the boss. I don't hardly ever give anybody any shit like that at a wrestling show, because I'm a man who walks the path of least resistance, or at least the path of least conflict creation, but still... folks should be as creative with their in-ring wrestling work as they try to be with their bullshit catchphrases they try and throw at the crowd regularly, hoping something will stick. (BEER ELEVEN) Brisco wins because Muraco doesn't let go before five once the champ wriggles his way under the ropes for a ref count. I have to be at work in less than five hours, so I will most likely quickly burn through these last two beers and a match or two so I can sleep for a few minutes before negotiating another day. Just like the piece of shit I am.

Brisco vs. Terry Funk for the NWA title now, and the spinning toehold is right up there with sleeperhold and Asiatic spike (Big Daddy Kane's penis?) as most ridiculous looking pre-kayfabe-fucked moves. Funk wins! Funk wins! Your ring announcer is straight pimping in a plaid suit.

Funk is selling the World title's importance as he hypes up an upcoming match against one Harley Race. But that is just prelude to an Eddie Graham vs. Bad Bad Leroy Brown match. Many folks don't know of the brilliance of a folksy songwriter by the name of Jim Croce, or they just know him as a random song on the oldies channel, busting out "Operator (That's Just Not the Way It Feels)"; but Jim Croce is one of the few men who actually was so motherfuckin' great a storyteller within his songs that there ended up being a wrestler who's gimmick was culled from that song. (I do remember a time where Leroy Brown was in Mid-Atlantic as a simple country boy who wrestled in overalls, but then he got wrapped up with Sir Oliver Humperdink I think, dyed his beard blonde, and started wearing fancy white suits, proving his high-falutin'ness.) Well, true to song character, Leroy Brown is cheating with some brass knucks concealed in his sweat socks, and the sad thing is once Eddie Graham picks them up off the mat after all the usual foreplay, he throws the shittiest far-flung punches with the knucks - the type that would make even Lance Storm cringe, even though he never wrestled Eddie Graham - and then you've got Sir Oliver Humperdink, local sportscasters, and all sorts of crap going on. Graham wins, but Jim Croce never wrote no song called "Bad Eddie Graham".

Quick clip of Dusty Rhodes taking on the Missouri Mauler, who looks like one out of every three last guys you saw on the local news getting arrested for taking indecent liberties with minors. (BEER TWELVE) Oh yeah, this is some sort of tournament for the Florida title, with Rhodes winning over the Missouri Mauler to face Bob Roop in the finals, and Rhodes gets a quick vic. Goddamn, shit's moving too quick for my slow mind, and now we got Terry Funk talking anger as his bro stands there looking like a guidance counselor in his fat-bottomed tie, and Dory is

faded because if you mention to a hundred wrestling fans the word "Funk", they're gonna think you mean Terry.

Jack Brisco vs. Pak Song from April 1976, and Pak Song doesn't wear shoes because Asian wrestlers are trained in being able to point their toes into your body to fuck you up extra. If Ricky Morton and Robert Gibson had been Oriental, they would've paralyzed mad motherfuckers with that double dropkick. Jack Brisco wins, despite Pak Song's attempts to get himself disqualified. So Jack Brisco celebrates winning the Florida title while Planet Asia plays over the P.A. Oh fuck yeah... I think this might be the end of the DVD, but it's also the end of my last beer, where Killer Karl Kox plays up his military background to pull out a portfolio to show how The Iron Sheik used to be a bodyguard for The Shah of Iran (who was not named Hack). "As a veteran, and a true American, I think I have something everybody should see...", and all while wearing a camoflaug cap. Kox struggles through the promo, and Solie has to help him explain the Freedom of Information Act, but Kox was probably the most veteran-looking guy they could throw out there for this bit. But you know all these pics Kox is showing were from Sheik's personal collection, and if he was a personal bodyguard for Hack Myers' wife back in the day, he must've been hooked up to get flown to America once the radical Islamists took over. Was the Iron Sheik hooked up with the CIA? Is his accent fake, as well as his appearances for fifty bucks and a hotel room on Springer? And how do you go from being a bodyguard for a head of state's spouse to being a fake pimp on the Jerry Springer Show? Is that a proud decline? Would the Sheik look at some bullshit movie file on the internet where he's old and acting retarded as the highlight of his short life?

Who the fuck cares? He's an Iranian piece of shit, so fuck him. I'm slamming this last beer so I can go to sleep for three hours before getting up to half-ass my way through work tomorrow. God bless America.

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PHIL SCHNEIDER'S ON-GOING TOP 20 of 2006

Here is the current list, reviews for the older matches are in previous DVDVR's

1. Rey Mysterio v. Randy Orton WWE 4/4
2. Chris Benoit v. Finlay WWE 5/3
3. Finlay v. Rey Mysterio WWE 3/20
4. Chris Benoit v. JBL WWE 4/11
5. Chris Benoit v. William Regal WWE 5/8
6. La Mascara/El Hijo Del Santo v. Blue Panther/Tarzan Boy CMLL GDL 1/1
7. Rey Mysterio v. Mark Henry WWE 1/15
8. Damien Wayne v. Sean Denny NWA-VA 5/6
9. Rey Mysterio/Bobby Lashley/Chris Benoit v. JBL/Finlay/Randy Orton WWE 2/23
10. Samoa Joe v. Necro Butcher IWA-MS 1/12
11. Juventud v. Kid Kash WWE 1/3
12. Finlay v. Bobby Lashley WWE 5/8
13. Undertaker v. Kurt Angle WWE 2/19

14. KENTA/Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone v. Kenta Kobashi/Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Tamon Honda NOAH 2/17
15. KUDO & MIKAMI v. Yoshiaki Yago & MIYAWAKI Chikara 2/24
16. Finlay/JBL v. Lashley/Chris Benoit WWE 2/16
17. Finlay v. Chris Benoit WWE 1/30
18. Samoa Joe v. BJ Whitmer ROH 1/14
19. Shadow WX/Mammoth Sasaki v. Abdullah Kobyashi/Daisuke Sekimoto BJJ 1/27/06
20. Chris Benoit v. Randy Orton WWE 1/24

Previously on the list

- Milano Collection AT/Skyde v. Claudio Castagnoli/ Chris Hero Chikara 2/26
- A.J. Styles v. Matt Sydal ROH 1/14
- HHH v. Big Show WWE 2/13

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1. Rey Mysterio v. Randy Orton WWE 4/4

Boy this was one hell of a way to kick off Rey Mysterio's title reign. 20+ minute epic main event title match. Orton had masturbated into one too many Diva's yogurt cups and was working like he knew he was possibly done for good. This match was worked like a NCAA basketball game between a run and gun team and a Princeton offense team, with the guy who could impose his pace on the match would take control. Orton who was really working a Messiah of the Chinlock gimmick, even broke out another variation, and Rey worked all of his offense off of the ropes and counters using his speed.

No surprise that Rey ended up injured, as he was really going nuts here, hitting a springboard senton to the floor, and taking a Jerry Estrada level crazy bump off the apron. This is easily the best match of Orton's career. Rey and Orton were really working some high end timing spots and they hit all of them perfectly. He also did a great job selling all of Rey's stuff, I especially loved his selling in the stretch run, as he really looked like a guy who had been knocked loopy, while still getting in perfect position for all of Rey's spots. Rey was amazing as usual, and it really looked like the start of a special title run, and if he is only going to get one title defense, this was a hell of a defense to go out on.

2. Chris Benoit v. Finlay WWE 5/3

I don't understand why all of a sudden the WWE will give Chris Benoit and Fit Finlay 20+ minutes on free TV to wrestle, it is counter to everything that the promotion has represented, it really is baffling. I mean you almost get the sense that Vince doesn't even watch Smackdown anymore. Not only was this ridiculously long, but the first 7 minutes or so were all mat work, that is more televised matwork than the entirety of 1999. Man was the matwork great too, every hold was tight enough that you could see faces redden and veins pulse. After basically all matwork and short strikes Finlay's eye was swollen and Benoit was bleeding from the head. Finlay was amazing here, as he takes both legit injuries and tries to accentuate them, he takes a bump on the ring steps right on his swollen eye, and just forearm the crap out of Benoit's cut. For a guy who was basically crippled Finlay takes some huge bumps including taking Benoit's German suplexes like a crazed Irish Misawa. I really loved the finish, if you are going to have the heel win with interference, he might as well crack the side of someone's neck with chair like that. The

great thing about this match is that it felt like it was building to something even bigger and crazier. I am hoping we get the rematch at Judgment Day, and it drives me nuts that in this day and age, where every single tiny indy running in an armory somewhere has easily available DVD's, that Finlay and Benoit are working house shows with each other that are just lost for posterity.

4. Chris Benoit v. JBL WWE 4/11

WWE has this tendency to have feuds end with televised cage matches. Most of the time they have a tendency to be more spotfesty and not nearly violent enough. In a lot of those matches the cage is a prop to jump off of, rather than something to punish someone with. While this match did have the insane top rope German suplex, this was way more of a violent fight than most WWE cage matches. They both beat the crap out of each other, constantly interrupting moves to punch or chop or kick the shit out of each other.

There was this really great mat section in the middle of the match. JBL uses an elevator to get out of the sharpshooter, he then just starts blasting Benoit in the face with right hands, Benoit then grabs an arm, tries for a crossface, JBL keeps his hands locked, and Benoit just pounds on his hands and starts headbutting him in the back of the head. Even the matwork was violent. I also really enjoyed Jillian Hall in the Medusa role in this match, they really shouldn't have broken her and JBL up. The lowblow finish, with JBL scurrying out of the cage, was a perfect finish for the match and his character. It needed blood, but it was still JBL's best non-Eddie match ever.

5. Chris Benoit v. William Regal WWE 5/8

This is probably my favorite match up in wrestling history. These two just gel perfectly and they work this tight legit style which is just awesome looking. Really is the closest mainstream U.S. wrestling ever really comes to shootstyle. While Japanese shoot wrestling comes from a martial arts base, the Regal v. Benoit stuff is more based around traditional American wrestling, wrestled tighter and nastier than ever. Sort of a natural progression from what Johnny Valentine was doing. Lots of nifty little shit here, Benoit's bug eyed sell after getting his head kicked into the ringpost, the beautiful but violent mat exchanges, the open palm strikes by Regal, the chop to the forehead. The way Regal takes the suplexes really works with the style of match these guys work, he makes Benoit dead lift him, so it looks like a really great feat of strength, and then at the very end goes over fast so he takes it right on his head and neck. Even the opening collar and elbow, was about the tightest collar and elbow lock up I can remember.

One quibble I have had about their previous WWE match ups, is that Regal never got any convincing near falls. Here both the count out (I think the only match Regal ever won in this series was by count out) , and the pair of exploder suplexes were both really nice near falls.

8. Damien Wayne v. Sean Denny NWA-VA 5/6

This is a rematch of their 60 minute match from North Carolina early in the year. When I reviewed that match I commented that I thought it was too long, but that both guys had a really great 20 minute match in them. This was that great 20 minute match. Damien Wayne is the most underrated wrestler in America, DVDVR may have pimped Preston Quinn enough so he gets some hype, but Wayne is as good as PQ at this point and flashy enough that he could steal

a TNA PPV. Sean Denny is a guy I hadn't seen a ton of before this year, but he has stepped right in and become yet another very good wrestler in NWA-VA's ridiculously deep roster. The match opened with some really nice mat work, not complicated, but tight and really fast, actually reminded me of opening caida lucha matwork. They then break out some absolutely huge spots, including Wayne eating a calf branding on the apron, Denny getting powerbombed on the corner of the apron, a long awesome hanging verticle suplex, floatover piledriver, top rope belly to belly suplex, top rope elbow drop. It's indy wrestling in 2006, giant spots really don't mean that much- hell, I have seen matches where two guys do nearly as much crazy shit in their debut match. What separates this match from say Joker v. Derek Frazier, is the execution, selling and in between stuff. All of those things were spot on here. The hanging superplex for example was just beautiful, held just long enough so the anticipation is killing you and then just slamming down like a car wreck. Then both guys sell it like they fell off a roof. The little stuff was great too, even with all the insanity, the thing that might have been the most impressive was Damien Wayne's right hand. If NWA-VA is running stuff even close to this good on a semi-weekly basis they need to make the Action Zone weekly. People shouldn't have to wait a couple of months to see this match.

12. Finlay v. Bobby Lashley WWE 5/8

This is the match where Finlay just cemented his case for the best wrestler in the world. Lashley is improving, but he is still basically a guy with a nice clothesline and not much else. Finlay takes him by the hand and carries him through a great match. This was the first match where Lashley actually got to use any of his amateur wrestling and he starts by shooting the single leg and spinning to a go-behind. It really was one of the most impressive things I have seen him do, and he should mix in more amateur spots. Lashley's strikes looked way better here then they had before too, as he was throwing some nice right hands, when they had previously looked like ass.

But fuck Lashley, this is the Finlay show baby. Just a stellar job of a heel controlling a match, knowing just the right time to mix in some hope spots, pounding the shit out of Lashley when he was in control, and bumping huge for him when Lashley came back. Finlay was pinballing for Lashley's suplexes, but even as he was getting thrown around the ring, he would know right when to take over. The apron skirt counter here was awesome, especially the rapid fire combos he threw after, as was the high knee counter to the spear. When I heard that Finlay was coming back, I was ridiculously excited, but the best I hoped for was a couple of fun Velocity matches, never in my wildest dreams would I expect multiple 15+ minute TV matches week after week.

~!~

THE CLASSIC WRESTLING FROM ST LOUIS- VOL 7.- 1981. [DEAN RASMUSSEN]

I got almost all of these now and all them fucking rule. 1981 was a year of transition. Guys didn't even have mullets yet. I remember when guys first started sporting mullets in my high

school- it was 1983 and the thing folks forget is that mullets were a new wave thing before it was a red neck thing. So yeah.

Ken Patera vs Dewey Robertson: I was really stoked about this because Dewey Robertson is the fuckin Missing Link and if you don't dig the weirdness of the Missing Link, I just wanna know what your fucking problem is. Here he is carrying the Best Stiff In The Annals Of Wrestling- Ken Patera. Patera is the Best Possible Lex Luger- in that he is a clumsy lummoX, but you buy the fact that he would kick your ass. Plus his ring psychology is always pretty deep. With one look, he can convey they he is guarded and careful and not afraid to be called a coward to make sure that he is always in control of the situation. I love how they make a Flying Crossbody for two into a total panicky crisis for Patera- who calculates and stays away from Robertson until they knucklelock- wherein they do the odd thing of having Dewey power up against the strongest man on earth. Patera tries to monkey flip out of his odd predicament but Dewey stops and drops a knee directly into Patera's steroid-drenched cornshoot and this is truly a weird fucking beginning of this dvd. Patera crushes Dewey's back for a while- hitting some fabulous elbow drops. Dewey battles out of the bearhug and keeps going and going and HOLY CRAP! THIS match is going BROADWAY~! I don't dig the Missing Link that much. Still, it was perfectly fine for the first ten minutes. And then you get five more.

Spike Huber vs Gil Guerrerro: Huber is the guy in every territory that can have a fine little match with your better enhancement talent. Steve Meuzzlin would go 11 minutes with Bill White in Mid-Atlantic. Skip Young would go 14 with Bull Ramos in Texas. Here Spike Huber gets the crowd worked up a little by doing lots of armdrags and leapfrogs and sunset flips until Gil Guerrerro gets in a minute of offense before Spike cuts him off and they take it to the mat while Larry Matistyk talks about the Air Traffic Controllers Strike. Meanwhile, I join the guys with the giant hair in the first four rows- impatiently awaiting Harley Race beating the hell out of David Von Erich. Which was the point of this match so Mission Accomplished.

Jack Brisco beats the hell out of the 12 year old Wild Bill Irwin in 2 minutes. FROM FLORIDA!

Harley Race vs David Von Erich: Harley Race is becoming my favorite all-time wrestler. I think it's the bizarre fruity flourishes he does with every hard as fucking nails move he does. He is complete- the black the white and all the shades of grey. Manliest of men yet beautiful and graceful as he flies facefirst to the mat. This match is awesome. It starts like all Harley Race carrying the Von Erichs starts out- the von Erich does a headlock for five minutes to remind you that their genetically mutated tendons have tremendous tensile strength to subtly reinforce the Idea Of The Claw. Race is awesome using his legs and his arched back and fingers to sell the pressure on a small part of his head. Race gets his first comeback with a sweet looking dropkick but David dodges a headbutt and reapplies the headlock, softening the already established very hard head of Harley Race- a point of psychology that I never consciously realized when noting that Race versus a Von Erich is better than anybody versus a Von Erich. His Samoan styled head is a perfect foil for the graspy vice-like claw of the von Erichs. Here, Race fucking CRUSHES Davids face with a headbutt to work out of the headlock section until David suplexes Race back into a headlock. Race finally escapes by crushing both of their bodies with a crossbody block and follows up with a headbutt- thus establishing the 70s

psychology of Race beating the fuck out of the babyface and the babyface slowly fighting his way back. David took an assbeating like a KING- leaning into the 1981 Tombstone piledriver and then punching Race dead in the face before Race piledrives him again. Race goes up for a diving headbutt but David does some questionable selling and they do the Flair spot of being launched off the corner. Race dodges an elbow drop and suplexes to set his own missed elbow drop. Race bumps to the floor after they collide again and Harley mauls him on the outside. David fights back and Race fucking LEANS INTO HIS PILEDIVER like a fucking freak- driving all of his weight into the mat and it look truly hellish. David follows it up with an Iron Claw and one can suppose that St Louis didn't protect the piledriver like they did in Mexico and Memphis- regardless of how Race takes it. Race fucking DIES missing a diving headbutt from the second rope and David does the goofy second rope drop into a Claw. Race opts to throw the ref into David to stop the damage and decides to finish the little bastard by suplexing him to the floor. Kerry comes out for the save and Larry Mistejyk interviews him after Harley runs off and Kerry beats Terry Leonard in two minutes with a stomach claw. Kerry doesn't really get over the fact that Harley Race just tried to end his brother's career- talking about how he would be in line for a shot at Flair's belt if he beats Race. I would assume that after a few more years experience, Kerry would have felt the moment and threatened to end Race's career or beat Race half to death with a chair or run him over with a car. This same idea executed in Memphis would have been far more fun.

Bobo Brazille vs David Price: Jesus, I hated Bobo Brazille. Here it's super annoying. David Price is about the size of Lee Scott and looks to be Muchnick's in-house bumpfreak. I think to myself that this is good. Brazille should kill him in one minute and get off my TV machine and let me move on with my dvd veiwing experience. EN LIEU, here is a list all the offense that a guy who is the size of Doug Flutie gets in on a 280 pound 6'6" Black man from Detroit spread out over 12 minutes:

1. headlock
2. two eyerakes
3. punch in the stomach
4. eyerake
5. kick in the stomach
6. punch in the head
7. four punches to the head and a punch to the stomach
8. two eyerakes
9. four punches to the head and headlock.
10. Two punches to the stomach.

Bobo finally ends it with one minute left. Bobo Brazille's punches and elbows make you long for the savage fury and stiffness of Lance Storm in a mixed tag match at a house show.

Baron Von Raschke vs Bulldog Bob Brown: This is fucking hilarious. Bulldog Bob Brown has the physique of a shiner and might as well just come to the ring in a little go-cart. You know what Baron von Raschke looks like. This whole match is a twenty minue headlock and it truly looks like Bulldog Bob Brown is the shift manager at BestBuy and he wants to show the younger

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[illegible]

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Andre the Giant vs. The Masked Superstar- [RAVEN MACK]: I think these guys ended up teaming in that Machine gimmick, which I can't even remember why Andre had to go under a mask. Man, I love the old babyface conned into leaving so he foils his managerial nemesis from the land of suspension with an inane masked gimmick, forever claiming not to be who he

obviously is. The fans love it because the shithead is getting his comeuppance, and it also leaves them on the edge of their nerves, because if the beloved babyface does somehow somehow get unmasked, he'll be gone forever (or a year), not just a month (or 90 days). The Masked Superstar was probably the most intelligent-sounding motherfucker I had ever heard the first eight years of my life, and is still up there (if you had Noam Chomsky, Stephen Hawking, and The Masked Superstar all read four selected paragraphs from some scientific journal, who do you think would sound the smartest?). The fact Superstar is not working for a halfway worthwhile paycheck in a nice suit and silver and black mask as some young wrestling tag team's mouthpiece makes me hate Professional Wrestling 2006.

Superstar comes out confident, waving his finger in Andre's big goofy face, and readily jumping into the collar-and-elbow, of course only to get thrown into the corner like a Waldorf-style doll. Andre is so big and powerful he can do comedic nonsense even with a serious asshole like Superstar, emulating the loveable giant persona that folks would clamor to see. But as Andre goofs off, crushing Superstar from behind, that wise malevolent mind strikes with a knee to the lower back, which allows the masked man a chance to protect his gimmick and make the match more than a carny display of one giant motherfucker. Superstar even puts some sort of cobra clutch thing on Holmes. But Andre the tactician goes for the one weakness - Superstar's hidden identity - which then leads to a big foot and big fat French ass across the chest for the one-two-three.

Great American Bash 1985- Buddy Landel vs. Ron Bass- [young ROB NAYLOR] : Quite a weird match from this particular old NWA show to choose. This particular Bash had an outdoor Stadium setting, which I always think adds to the atmosphere of shows, crazy fans (who weren't afraid to hop rails to stop the Russians from killing David Crockett and Ric Flair....ok, well, at LEAST Flair), the greatest sounding ropes of the era (LOUD CABLES), all at a time in wrestling where everything was peaking.

At the time: Texas had the Von Erichs, Kabuki, Adams and Gino; Mid South had Murdoch, Dibiase, Butch Reed and the Nightmare; WWF had Hulkamania and the US Express and a whole host of characters and pizzazz and of course, AWA had Jimmy Garvin, Fabulous Freebirds, Long Riders and Sergeant Slaughter.

But NWA is and was always the best. It was way more realistic at the time. Dusty Rhodes and Jimmy Valiant were constantly getting attacked by groups of bad people and just never could get ahead, Magnum was on the rise to what everyone figured was a no-brainer NWA belt win over Flair down the road, Tully was using his slut Baby Doll running interference to try to cheat his way to the top and the Rock N Roll Express were starting their road to Superstardom in the Carolinas.

One thing that needs to be said about Dusty Rhodes as a booker. He always had something for EVERYONE at the time. Looking back on tapes, I can see people saying he did TOO many angles and had TOO many good guys being attacked, but I call BULLSHIT on that thought. As a kid, I didn't give a fuck about TOO many angles or overbooking. I didn't have fuck one of a clue as to what those things were. I just always knew that shit was going down and that something shitty was always just seconds away from happening to the good guys, whether it be Ron Bass, Ron Garvin, Denny Brown, Sam Houston, Dusty Rhodes or Manny Fernandez.

He made the most of all the guys he booked, by making people care about their health and well being.

For instance...Ron Bass. Sorry, but just looking at Cowboy Ron Bass, he never screamed superstar to me. He was an overweight dude, who punched and kicked and really wasn't hugely over as a good guy. Till Black Bart, James J. Dillon and the Rising Sons attacked him and tried to hang him with a noose. Then shit got hectic.

This match had a good vs. bad premise. It had the punky Budro, who in this match just LAYS chops, punches, kicks and everything else into Bass. Bass, a tough son of a bitch, just allows Landel to legitimately potato him on most of this and it all looks very much real. Landel had just about the BEST follow-through on his chops. Full extension on the stuff. He just shitcans Bass to the floor, where the potbellied Texan leans his fat ass against the guardrail as that sneaky dickwad JJ Dillon runs over in his cheesy tuxedo and runs his nails down Bass's back. Then slowly walks away like nothing happened.

There is a camera shot in this match that I think if it were made a still, would really be a great testimony of what pro wrestling is all about. The sun's setting and the sky is dark blue, the outdoor stadium is packed with fans and Buddy, all eyes darkened from the prior night's coke-binge is irish whipped into the far buckle and bounces out into a gloved right hand from the Cowboy, with Landel's head bouncing sickly off the mat on a bump. It got a huge fucking pop. Bass then sits over Landel and punches him straight in the face in front of Sonny Fargo and then grabs Landel by the head/hair and pounds the back of his head into the mat.

Bass takes attention of Buddy....goes outside chasing down Dillon, Dillon hits the ring runs into Buddy...and they each take an overdramatic spill and flop around and Bass does a CLAW with the glove fist on JJ and the fans erupt. Match is declared a DQ win for Bass. Fans cheer, Buddy and JJ run out of the ring like cowards all disheveled and people go nuts. Amazing how easy it was to get fans to dig a finish like that in 1985. God bless the DQ finish. It is sorely missed.

Simple match that I advise people to seek out.

Freebirds vs. Iceman Parsons, Kevin & David Von Erich- [RAVEN MACK]: I've never been much for the Von Erich family, and the Freebirds coming out to actual "Freebird" is hard to not get all hyped about, because good Skynyrd, regardless of how much your local classic rock soulless tentacle of Clear Channel plays it out, is the type of stuff that motivates men to this day to knock off at lunch, grab a 12-pack of something cold, and go sit by the river. The fact that the Von Erichs maintained their face role over the slightly popular Freebirds all that time is a testament to some great simple man booking. I mean, fuck, those two groups feuded for ever. Living far from Texas, but buying every Apter mag I could waste my allowance on back then, I always knew the results from the lone star state were gonna have some form of Von Erich vs. Freebird, and probably an Abdullah the Butcher vs. Bruiser Brody result. Those Wrestling Scene and Ringside magazines (the non-Apter ones) were good for the Abby vs. Brody ones because they'd have some gory full-color pin-up for you to revel in. Ahh... can it be it was all so simple then?

Having grown into an old curmudgeon wrestling nerd, I've watched way too much wrestling of the professional variety, including enough Von Erichs to re-evaluate my opinions of them. But it hasn't changed much. I don't like the Von Erichs. Kerry was a pretty boy powerhouse who when he wanted to was entertaining, but Kevin not wearing shoes couldn't hide the fact he was one

vanilla whitebread motherfucker. David, though, I've come to appreciate, as he was the one who translated into other areas at a young age, and would've made a lot of sense (and probably great matches) facing off against a Ric Flair at the Cotton Bowl in supercards years later. There seems to be some added intensity between Buddy Jack Roberts and Iceman King Parsons to start, and they get to scuffling which leads to a ring-clearing free-for-all for the ref to get order and start the match something proper like. There was some guy back home in Farmville we used to buy weed from - this older black dude who lived over on the edge of the projects and had been to prison and had all these weird moon and star tattoos all over his chest. Me and another dude stole his plants one time from behind his house, and I was always afraid he'd figure it out and shoot me, and seeing Iceman Parsons reminds me of this. Your pop media black thug types today are so clean and well-sketched out - not nearly enough jailhouse-tattooed guys with bad hair. Then again, not enough crazy looking redneck types anymore either. The jheri curl and short-in-the-front-long-in-the-back cuts are gone I guess, and will only come out for themed Halloween parties where well-off white kids get to pretend to actually be part of the cultures they find so amusing and entertaining. I imagine the mid '80s World Class roster could run up quite a collective bar tab some nights.

There are a pair of women with shirts with iron-on letters. The slightly chubby super-sexy chick on the left rocks a softball jersey that reads "CHARLOTTE LOVES TERRY GORDY", while her scrawnier compadre - both blondes of course because this is the '80s (and I guess even blondes hate their hair now too, just like jheri curls and short-and-longs) - is rocking a black tee with "SHARON LOVES MICHAEL HAYES". There hasn't even been an official lock-up yet, and I'd already give this match two-and-a-half stars. [Honestly, I was gonna finish this one review then probably go to bed or some shit, sipping on a Dr. Pepper, but the very presence of grown women in the front row of a wrestling show, and on top of that beautiful by that day's standards women, wearing homemade t-shirts to show their love of the unloved bastard Freebirds, it has invigorated me to the point of opening an Old Style.]

Kevin and Gordy tie up second, after David and Hayes do their little starting bit, and Kevin really lays some nice punches into Gordy, and goes for a giant headbutt, but becomes groggy while still holding Gordy, so he slams Gordy's head into Iceman's head, and every wrestling fan from before Nirvana came out knows a black wrestler's head is hard as fuck. I like Kevin jobbing his white head's hardness out to Parsons beforehand - the slight ritualistic layers of a wrestling match that tell stories without obviously telling them. Make this a three-star match.

Match moves along and we end up with Gordy and David exchanging punches, back and forth, center-ring. David revs back for one big smash but instead slaps on the claw. Fuckin' beautiful. Hayes runs in to break it up, so David lets loose one head and catches the other. Buddy Roberts makes the save and beats upon David for a few minutes, reminding me that Michael Hayes wasn't just the sexiest Freebird - he was the shittiest one as well. The Freebirds just keep beating upon and beating upon David in fact, and he takes it like a man, wobbling his lanky body even better than Barry Windham in his prime. David is actually fighting and squirming for a tag now, but always denied, the southern tag multiplied into a six-man affair, and the crowd pretty much is squealing constantly, with decibel peaks as he almost makes it, almost, time after time. Easily a three-and-a-half star match.

David sneaks a hook 'em horns hand gesture out while crowd yells "GO DAVID GO!" without rhythmic clapping or looking at each other and laughing, but Hayes punches all David's partners

in the mouth to break up any legal tag possibilities by having them lose control of their legal senses and try to rush in to help. Thank goodness the referee was there to slowly remind them of how they are law-abiding wrestlers and he is the enforcer of the laws, and he's going to make sure they take their rightful place in the corner holding the tag rope, regardless of whatever that commotion is going on behind him. A four-star affair, for sure.

Finally, David makes the hottest of hot tags, which almost immediately leads to everybody being in the ring, ref loses control, and while he attends to the wrong thing, Buddy Roberts knocks Iceman Parsons out for Gordy to pin. Why's the black man got to be doing the job for some sons of a German immigrant? And folks think the Freebirds' confederate flag is racist.

LLL Mixed Tag- Abismo Negro and Mini Abismo vs. Mascara Sagrada and Mascarita Sagrada from (I'm figuring 2003).- [ROB NAYLOR]: This is one of my all time favorite lucha libre matches. Everyone likes and dislikes stuff about lucha. I've always enjoyed it. My favorite kind of lucha is just very smooth tumbling and over the top high flying. The people in lucha who make it look effortless have always just freaked me out. Guys like Silver King, Virus, Zumbido, Espectrito, Jerry Estrada and others. They all seemed to just glide and fly on their bumps. It just looks polished.

So I really dug this match...as you have two of the most incredible bases in Mini Abismo and Abismo, taking on a very crafty veteran of Lucha Libre and his little understudy, the amazing Mascarita Sagrada (2nd version).

When this was sent to me around 3 years back, I kinda enjoyed it also as it had an announcer actually doing commentary in English, which I found totally unusual and actually a first out of any lucha I've seen that wasn't WWC ppv.

Anyway, I recall at the time, I had NO IDEA that Abismo was Winners. I recall watching a bit of Winners back in 93/94 when AAA was nearing a peak in popularity and he really just didn't seem like the guy that went on to be the incredibly tough dude that made Super Nova and Discovery look like champs later in the 90's.

Mini Abismo and Mascarita start this shit off with a bang, just busting out some nice opening armdrags and counterarmdrags, all slick and shit, closing with a double nip-up and face off. I'm not afraid to mark out for shit like that, so I loved the open.

THEN, holy shit it just blows you away from the gitgo, as Mascarita comes bounding off the ropes, Mini Abismo picks/sweeps his leg and Mascarita all in ONE MOTION just twists and turns fluidly and hits a caaaraaaazaaay necktie headscissors, sending Mini Abismo running to the floor. One of the most beautiful highspots I've ever seen.

Then Mascara and Big Abismo just come in and just break out the pure lucha, sweeping legs, rolling out, nipping up, hitting armdrags... and it is great stuff. Tirantes is his usual dickhead self getting on Mascara for cheating, even though nothing of the sort came close to happening.

After the mini's got some time in the ring, Mascara and Abismo AGAIN go at it and holy shit, they just were so on point in wrestling with each other. Mascara at this time and in this match was on fire, running around like he was 15 years younger and confusing Abismo with different forms of one upmanship with the closing with the every lucha match staple of the spinning backbreaker.

Rudos get control and wind up getting dual submissions on both Sagradas.

Second fall sees the good guys come back swiftly and get some dope looking double submissions on the Sagradas with Mascarita freaking people out in particular with the Dragon Kid multiple revolution satellite headscissors turned octopus variation that gets a quick tap out. Third fall is just reGOTTDAMMdiculous with Mascarita just putting on a freaking flyin clinic, hitting a flying bodypress turned one revolution satellite headscissors. Then this little freak goes and hits the "I don't want to live" fallaway diving plancha into a rana to the floor that makes Oriental's version look like Andre doing in by comparison onto Mini Abismo. JUST FUCKING NUTS. Love it.

Seriously, I realize high flying wrestling is the wrestling snobs worst enemy (anyone who arrogantly uses the term flippy should shut the fuck up, as it is ten times more annoying to me that "This is Awesome" or any chants that are so often bitched about), but Mascarita is the fuckin shit. Guys like him and Jack Evans bring a sense of constant danger and WTF?! is gonna happen next while in the ring. You actually get that general sense of fear for these people. Sabu used to sell me tickets for the entire nineties on the same premise. So hey people, no matter how fucking smart you think you are, remember that wrestlers do shit to freak fans out. They've turned it up 20 notches, but appreciate what these people are doing. Remember the days of marking out at the first somersault tope you ever saw and of Sting hitting a top rope plancha outside the ring. Feel the rush and EMBRACE the high flying crazy stuff.

Great finish in this, that I won't give away...but it was mix of powder, TEEEFANNEE, Martaaah Villalobos (nowhere near as cool as Manuel, btw), a big splashdown and Tirantes loosing all semblance of control and order.

This is definitely my favorite standard tag mixed tag with two older vets just finding youth and energy and two of the best ever mini's taking it to a new level of greatness. And TEEEFANNEE!!!

Katsuyori Shibata vs. Katsuhiko Nakajima- BIG MOUTH LOUD- 4/19/2006- [ROB NAYLOR]: Look, I'm not even as into the whole BML craze like most are, but this style of grappling when done best is just absolutely fantastic to watch. Shibata is obviously a huge favorite among most for being a fierce, confident asskicker. He can drop matches left and right and still maintain cred. My personal favorite Shibata match was the loss to Kawada some time back, but this match, to me, comes close and really encapsulates the best of this style of wrestling to me as a fan. Of course, it didn't hurt given he was facing off with another wrestler I've had a blast watching in the last year and a half, Katsuhiko Nakajima.

Nakajima is just an absolutely awesome young wrestler and his path to improvement is molding him into a super wrestler and the future of Japanese wrestling. He's taken each opportunity he's been given and tried to learn and make the most of each.

I've seen him adapt to wrestling in promotions like Dragon Gate, Z1, NOAH and now I've gotten to see this match (haven't seen the All Japan Nakajima wrestling as of yet).

He is lucky to have a unique role to play in most of his matches as the young upstart, but he definitely takes that role and excels in it. I loved the match with him and Sasaki vs. Kobashi and Go and also the main event of the Kensuke Office show, where he took a gigantic ass kicking that would make Frankie Defalco's training school look like a day spa by comparison.

This match, he again benefits from the freelancing wrestling gig he's got going and totally has a fantastic match with Shibata.

The match had the usual feeling out process opening with the glancing kicks and footwork. Wasn't long before Shibata backed up the youngster into the corner and just started uncorking kicks and nasty uppercuts to his prey. Of course, Nakajima, who's been hit and smacked by the best of them, fought through it and showed fire and came back bouncing up from a beel throw with one of his own...what followed was a GRRREAT spot where Nakajima went for the hiplock and Shibata just said...nah, nah, fuckah you-ah, and just shot and took Nakajima right down with the Fujiwara armbar.

Another thing I loved, whether planned or not, was when Nakajima did the rope running and Shibata did the old Manny Fernandez FAKE OUT dropdown and made Nakajima trip onto his face and then grabbed the leg and kicked the shit out of it. Very smart and resourceful move. A great camera shot shortly after, shows Nakajima's face grimaced and in pain after a particularly swift blow to his face.

Nakajima busts out a beautiful BOW AND ARROW (he's learned from the Mascaras match!) and Shibata proved why he rules beyond belief by pulling his arms forward rolling frontward, nipping up and then swiftly turning the move into a abdominal stretch!

The rest of the match is just fun as hell, with Shibata doing a great cover for a nearfall, complete with KNEE on Nakajima's throat, Nakajima busting out his perfect german suplex...but even sweeter, a sweeping roundhouse kick to the side of Shibata's face to set the move up. Just a sick precursor to a great german suplex nearfall.

Finish couldn't have been more fun either as they teased a few variations of armlock submissions, Shibata just kicked the fuck out of Nakajima's arm to numb it and then applying one cool submission that was fought by Nakajima valiantly, prior to Shibata transitioning it seamlessly to another. Seriously, GREAT fucking match.

I love my highflying and highspot-filled wrestling, but stuff like this is always just a huge treat to watch. Nakajima here reminded me of a young early 90's Tamura, a guy that was in a match that many figured he'd lose, but still came out of the match with a ton of respect afterward.

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8 FISTS IN THE FACE OF WRESTLING, MOTHERFUCKER.
THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ